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THE BOOK OF THE MONTH

A NEW HANDBOOK OF RELIGIONS¹

GEORGE A. BARTON, PH.D., LL.D.

Professor of Biblical Literature and Semitic Languages in Bryn Mawr College

This is in many ways a unique book. Brief handbooks which give the general reader an insight into the great religions of the world are, now that the world is so rapidly becoming one, a necessity. That happy union of the human race in the bonds of brotherhood and sympathy, of which noble souls dream, can never be accomplished until there is insight into and sympathy with the inner ideals and highest aspirations of each section of the race. Such insight and sympathy are impossible unless it begins with a sympathetic understanding of the spirit and genius of the different religions of men. Hence the increasing demand for clear, untechnical expositions of the principal features of the different religions.

General handbooks of the religions of the world have usually been written by one man. Such a writer may be an expert authority in one religion, or in two or three, if they happen to be religions of related peoples, but it is impossible that he should be an authority on all religions. He must, outside his own special field, compile his material from the works of other specialists, and the danger is that he will place the emphasis on phases that the specialist would not emphasize. One unique feature of the volume under consideration is that each religion is treated by a specialist in the religion or group of religions to which that religion belongs. Thus primitive religions are treated by Frank G. Speck; the Egyp-

tian religion by W. Max Müller; the religion of Babylonia and Assyria, and also Mohammedanism by Morris Jastrow, Jr.; the Hebrew religion, by James A. Montgomery; the religion of the Veda, Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism, all by Franklin Edgerton; Zoroastrianism, by Roland G. Kent; the religion of Greece, by Walter W. Hyde; the religion of the Romans, by George D. Hadzsits; the religion of the Teutons, by Amandus Johnson; early Christianity, by William Romaine Newbold; and mediaeval Christianity, by Arthur C. Howland. Dr. Montgomery explains in the Preface that "it was left to each man to set forth his subject according to his own ideas of matter and proportion." It follows that there is no stereotyped method of treatment. Each chapter presents in a fresh way the principal features of the religion in question. There is, however, on the whole a far greater unity of treatment than one would expect. This was, no doubt, produced by the scholarly instinct of the writers when compelled to treat such large subjects within such narrow limits. Most of the writers have succeeded, not only in setting forth the chief features of the religion treated, but in outlining the movement and development which has taken place within the religion itself. The lecture least successful in this respect is the one on the religion of the Teutons. One fails to find such progress noted as is outlined, for example, in

¹ *Religions of the Past and Present*. A Series of Lectures Delivered by Members of the Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. Edited by James A. Montgomery. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1918. Pp. 425. \$2.50.

Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Religion of the Teutons*.

Of special value for freshness of treatment are Montgomery's lecture on the religion of the Hebrews, Edgerton's on the religion of the Veda, Kent's on Zoroastrianism, Hyde's on the Religion of the Greeks, and Newbold's on Early Christianity.

Edgerton's observations on page 121 are of prime importance for the understanding of the Rig-Veda. He points out that at every sacrifice there were three sacred fires, and that the fire-priests had appropriated to themselves an earlier soma-cult. The Rig-Veda is in general the hymn book for use at these three-fire ceremonies. It was "composed by the fire-soma-priests themselves, for their own use. . . . Not only do they reflect constantly the class interests and the class viewpoint of their priestly authors, but they devote themselves exclusively to this ultra-hieratic phase of religion. . . . The religion portrayed by the great mass of the hymns of the Rig-Veda is very far from being the religion of the Vedic Aryans." It will be apparent at a glance how the recognition of this fact places the features of the Vedic hymns in a new perspective, and antiquates much that has been written on the Vedic religion.

The lecture on the religion of Greece is the most comprehensive and symmetrical in treatment of any in the book. It is a clear and authoritative statement, admirable from every point of view. The lecture on early Christianity also deserves high praise. For many years Dr. Newbold has studied the patristic literature *con amore*, and one comes at every turn upon fresh and original observations which illuminate and delight, even when one is skeptical as to the date assigned to a document.¹

The great defect of the book is that it contains no treatment of the religions of China, Japan, and postbiblical Judaism. It is explained in the Preface that the work is entirely the product of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, and that the projectors of the course (which was, by the way, delivered at the university during the academic year 1916-17) did not go outside the faculty to secure a treatment of any religion. This is to be regretted, for, had it been done, the volume would have comprised an admirable treatment of the religions of the world.

The University of Pennsylvania should, however, be congratulated that its faculty contains authoritative specialists on so many of the important religions of the world.

BOOK NOTICES

The Pauline Idea of Faith in Its Relation to Jewish and Hellenistic Religion. By W. H. P. Hatch. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917. Pp. 92.

This is a very painstaking examination of Paul's conception of faith studied in relation to similar ideas current in both his Jewish and his gentile environment. Hebrew and Jewish trust in Yahweh is described as essentially the

personal attitude of the pious man toward God, which is simply a feeling of confident trust devoid of all mysticism. This also is thought to have been the attitude of Jesus. Likewise for Paul faith included belief, trust, and loyalty, but it was also both the means of attaining to mystical fellowship with Christ and was "itself the mystical state in which the believer lives." This mystical note is regarded as a result of Paul's close contact with the gentile world.

¹ On p. 389 the typesetter was unequal to the Greek word *gnōsis*.